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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Equipment and Training of Soviet Army Units,  
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1. The questions dealing with the equipment and training of Soviet Army units within the USSR and abroad and the reason for the large size of the Soviet Army appear to me to be related. A description of the comparative status of units inside and outside of the USSR should give at least a partial answer to the reasons for the size of the Soviet Army. Units of the Soviet Army within the USSR are very different from those outside its borders. Let us take an Artillery Cannon Regiment as an example. There are two Artillery Regiments within a Soviet Division. One is called the Cannon (Pushechni) Artillery Regiment and the other is called the Howitzer (Gaubichni) Artillery Regiment. The Cannon Regiment has 36 pieces: 24 75-mm cannons and 12 122-mm howitzers. As the caliber of Soviet artillery is measured in inches, the 75-mm cannons are actually 76-mm - three inch - and of course the 122-mm howitzers are 4 1/2 inches. The Howitzer Regiment has 24 122-mm howitzers and 12 160-mm mortars. Although the mortars are reported to be 160-mm, I suspect that they really must be 152-mm, which would mean a six-inch mortar.

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2. As indicated above, the Cannon Artillery Regiment should have 36 pieces. In practice if the unit was stationed within the USSR it probably would have only 18 pieces and only about nine prime movers. There would be almost no general transportation equipment. The mobilization plan would provide for additional vehicles to be furnished in case of need from plants and sovkhoses, and for other vehicles to be manufactured. Most of the vehicles in the mobilization plan would come from the factories and sovkhoses. Frequently farm tractors manufactured in the USSR are extremely powerful so that they may be used by the military in event of mobilization. In regard to personnel, there would be a greater proportion of personnel in the unit than equipment, but it would not be full strength. All persons subject to draft are called up and trained. The mobilization plan would provide for half of the personnel in the unit to remain in the city where the Artillery Regiment is headquartered in order to form another regiment. The other half of the personnel, which would not equal 50% of full strength, would be augmented by reservists. Of course detailed mobilization plans differ for various units. At times personnel within a unit would be separated from that unit in order to serve as cadre for other types of units.
3. In regard to horse drawn vehicles prior to World War II, theoretical planning provided for extensive use of such vehicles. Standardized horses drawn vehicles were produced which were supposedly suitable for use by the army and by the sovkhoses and kolkhoses. The Soviet Army had in its actual possession 10% of the number of horse drawn vehicles it would need in the event of hostilities. In theory the other 90% were to be found on collective farms. In practice only about 20% were on the farms. Therefore, when the Russo-German War began in June 1941, the Army had to take what it could get. All types of farmers' wagons were taken and broke down very quickly and any kind of truck to be found was pressed into service. At present the Soviet Army still has a large proportion of horse drawn vehicles. These are useful for military operations in Eastern Europe where lack of roads, scarcity of heavy bridges, rain, mud and snow are handicaps to the use of motorized equipment. Therefore I suppose one could say that the Soviet Army is in a way more suited to operating in Eastern rather than Western Europe. Probably the Soviet Army would like to have additional fully motorized units for any possible operations in Germany and Austria. However, it must be remembered that the Soviets consistently bluff in regard to extent of production and of existing equipment and perhaps even claim to have twice as much as they actually do have. For example, the trucks which the USSR received from the US on Lend-Lease numbered more than all the trucks to be found in the USSR before World War II. In regard to other military equipment, such as artillery pieces and mobile large bridges for artillery units, such equipment was supposed to be available in the full amount in the mobilization reserves (mobzapasikh). In fact only a portion of such equipment was available. In some cases all the artillery pieces were there but there would be a shortage of other things, sometimes to the extent of having only 20% or 30% of the needed amount. Such shortages varied of course, but in general the simpler things just did not exist, such as telephone lines and harness. One of the reasons for the shortages was that the industrial economy just could not produce enough. For example in 1941 the best equipped Soviet armies were lost in the face of the German offensive. The Soviet army   in 1942 did not have a single telephone or any telephone wire. Communication was achieved to some extent by the use of taxis, bicycles, and horses. There was not even a single saddle available.
4. Soviet Army units outside the USSR are of course much closer to full strength. If hostilities should begin at once these units could fight with the strength at their immediate disposal. If there was a period available of two or three months for preparation for hostilities, they could pull back some of their personnel to act as cadre and bring up the unit to nearly full strength again by calling up reservists.

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5. The level of training for units within and outside the USSR would be approximately the same.
6. Every August the Soviet Army held unit maneuvers wherein a regiment of one division would engage in war games with another regiment of the same division. Every September each military district (voenni okrug) held maneuvers wherein one division would be pitted against another. Some military districts did not have corps organization. By September 1941, there were no corps left in the Soviet Army because of lack of transportation and communications equipment. Corps organization was reinstated only in 1945. In other words, the next major unit after a division was an army, up to 1945. Maneuvers in military districts were greatly limited by lack of railroad facilities. Each year each military district headquarters had to submit a request (zayavka) indicating railroad car-kilometers that it would need in order to move troops in the coming year. This request was sent to the Army General Staff in Moscow. The request would always be cut down because of the shortage of railroad cars and instructions would come through stating that a certain division could move on foot rather than by rail or could just have unit training. Military districts along the frontiers of the USSR usually held maneuvers in areas where offensive or defensive operations would probably occur in event of hostilities. Military districts in the interior of the USSR would use various areas for maneuvers depending upon the tactical problems involved each year.
7. To come back to the reasons for the large size of the Soviet Army, there are several reasons. The main reason is that the USSR is unable to equal the West in the amount of military equipment such as weapons, transport and communications. Therefore, having a huge population under Communist control throughout the world, the USSR tries to compensate for its lack of equipment by masses of manpower. I would estimate that the USSR cannot fully equip more than approximately 40 to 60 Army divisions. It must maintain a large number of divisions in order to fill out the strength of other divisions. In addition, divisions of the Soviet Army must be rotated in combat more frequently than US Army divisions. This is because a Soviet division can sustain combat only during a period of from five to seven days, particularly in the attack. I imagine a US Army division perhaps can operate for three weeks. I would estimate that a US Army division at present [1954] is equal in power to about 2 or 2½ Soviet Army divisions, well equipped by Soviet standards.
8. In regard to the question of how the Soviet Army plans to revise its tactical doctrines in an effort to reduce the effects of mass destruction weapons and yet maintain tactical integrity and combat effectiveness in the offense and in the defense, [redacted] However, it is possible to make certain assumptions, [redacted] there appear to have been no major changes in Soviet Army doctrines during the last 10 or more years. In regard to the attack, Soviet Army doctrines probably call for offensive operations on a very wide front with equally dispersed forces in order to avoid mass troop concentrations. The Soviets would oppose their mass manpower to the West's superior technology. In support of this theory is the apparent present trend of the Soviets to concentrate on ground support aviation. The above theory would provide another reason for a large Soviet Army. By attacking in such a manner, the Soviet Army would count on achieving at certain points penetration, exploitation of penetration in the rear of their opponents' forces, and infiltration. To obtain a detailed idea of how such tactics were utilized one should study the Soviet Army's winter campaigns of 1941-42. At that time, the Soviet Army in effect had only infantry forces equipped merely with rifles and a few machine guns. Perhaps new military monographs written by former German

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commanders on the Russian front during that period could be utilized in such a study. In regard to defensive operations, it is my opinion that in the present modern warfare one cannot have static defense. The operations in Korea were an exception, in that political considerations were perhaps more important than military. Therefore, modern war would see a fluid defense with some pulling back and some forward penetrations undertaken in order to halt the opponent's advance.

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9. In regard to the tactical concept for employing chemical warfare weapons in support of military operations, go back temporarily to the period prior to June 1941. At that time chemical warfare officers would occasionally make certain proposals stating that they could accomplish this or that if they received sufficient funds and equipment. The Soviet Army General Staff would always say that it was a fine idea but would do nothing about it. The emphasis at that time was on tanks, aviation, and infantry weapons. Such fields of activity as chemical warfare, communications, and mines were neglected. For example, tables of equipment called for units to have mines at their disposal, but there were none. The Army did have a few fine sample mines, but that was all. As a result, when hostilities broke out in June 1941, mines were manufactured in a great hurry and very poorly, with the result that handling of the mines incurred greater losses on Soviet troops than on the German Army. It is possible of course that the Soviet Army now pays more attention to chemical warfare. Prior to June 1941, the Soviet Army only had chemical mortars, metal cylinders which contained poison gas and could be opened in order to release the gas when the wind was in a favorable direction, and also, in theory, VAPs (Vilivnii Aviatonii Pribori-Airborne Spraying Equipment). However, the VAPs existed only in theory. In training for airborne chemical operations, plain bottles and crop dusting planes were used. The reasons for the above shortages were two: (a) a weak industry; (b) the Soviet Army General Staff was of rather inferior quality after the execution of Marshal Tukhachevsky and therefore the armed forces were not equipped in a balanced manner.

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10. During the period 1941 and 1942 there was a "Nachalnik Khim Sluzhbi" (Chief of the Chemical Defense Service) on the staff of each regiment, division and army. This officer had a staff, but no equipment or units under him. Individual soldiers had gas masks, and Soviet authorities feared, particularly in 1943, that the Germans would use poison gas. Incidentally, it is my personal belief that should an atomic war occur and should the Soviet armed forces obtain tactical air superiority, the Soviet authorities would not hesitate to use poison gas if they thought that it would be advantageous.
11. In regard to flame throwers, prior to mid-1941, the whole Soviet Army had less than 100, i.e., only some sample models existed and all were in the possession of the Military Chemical Defense Academy. At the summer training camp used by the Academy at Froliche, which was part of the Gorokhovets Camps there were 10 T-26 tanks equipped with flame throwers.

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